

Table 26**Retail Prices for U.S. Imports**

Type	Size	Price
Oak Strip Flooring Singles	57 mm × 19 mm	¥ 12 000/m ²
Doubles	57 mm × 19 mm + 83 mm × 19 mm	¥ 15 000/m ²
Stair Nosing	19 × 89 × 1 220 mm	¥ 64 000/10 strips
Moulding	11 × 89 × 1 980 mm	¥ 60 000/10 strips

These tariffs are likely to be revised downwards in April 1990 to encourage imports. In addition to the tariffs shown, there is a 3 per cent consumption tax applicable to all products at each level of distribution.

5 Approaching the Japanese Market

Key Factors for Success

Importers and Japanese manufacturers stress the importance of surface finish and measurement accuracy. The most important element in promoting solid-wood product sales, however, is to improve awareness of the advantages of solid wood. Second in importance is quality, third is design.

Improving awareness requires promotion directed at architects and contractors.

Quality is primarily associated both with surface finish and with the measurement accuracy of final products. Though measurement tolerances are specified by JAS, respect of these does not necessarily result in satisfactory products for Japanese end users. All connecting parts must fit with ease and the surface finish must be smooth.

Would-be importers must take account of the Japanese homeowner's preferences for simple and space-conscious product designs.

Skills for handling solid-wood products are gradually diminishing. For example, the average Japanese carpenter is unable to satisfactorily install solid-strip flooring. Most are unaware of pre-installation preventative measures for potential problems such as warping. Thus, it will be necessary to put in place education or training programs and to maximize customer support capabilities.

Adapt Products to the Market

North American solid-wood products have a reputation in the Japanese industry for warping in Japan's relatively high humidity. This problem can be avoided to a certain extent by increasing water content.

Additional quality control measures might be necessary to ensure product uniformity with regard to colour/tonne and grain pattern, reliability and durability.

Exporters should regularly conduct joint sales efforts with their import agent to obtain customer views and feedback on Canadian products.

Priority Markets

The advent of quality composite products, particularly for flooring, means that solid-hardwood flooring is primarily limited to very specific market niches such as top-of-the-line homes and particularly top-of-the-line 2 × 4 system homes and luxury boutiques, restaurants and coffee shops.